**Touch Starved**

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# Touch Starved

by Hisvoicebrokemyheart

Summary

Nigel first met his neighbor in the laundry room. Without a greeting he told Nigel to put out his freshly lit cigarette and launched into a lecture on the health risks of smoking that rivaled the ones he received from his grandmother as a teen. Only a few moments later he walked over to Nigel and gave him four quarters when he started cursing under his breath about coin-operated laundry.

Notes

Whumtober Day 5: Bruises/Touch Starved

This is my first time writing a Spacedogs fic. I haven't seen Adam, so I hope I honored his character — and of course I had to have Nigel fall for him instantly.

*self injury includes bruising and pinching

As always all mistakes are my own.

See the end of the work for more notes

The new apartment that Nigel signed for wasn't so bad. There were only two units on every floor, and the outside facing wall was floor to ceiling windows. When he thought back to what he put himself through in Romania he couldn't help but laugh. Every place he had there was a complete shithole.

It felt good to find something that was finally worth his while, and it felt even better to leave Europe —and all its history— behind him.

In the few short weeks since he moved he'd even had some pleasant interactions with his neighbor on his floor. Pleasant for him, maybe. His neighbor? He wasn't quite sure how their brief conversations were received on their end.

Nigel found him endlessly interesting. He first met him in the laundry room. Without a greeting he told Nigel to put out his freshly lit cigarette and launched into a lecture on the health risks of smoking that rivaled the ones he received from his grandmother as a teen. Only a few moments later he walked over to Nigel and gave him four quarters when he started cursing under his breath about coin-operated laundry.

He was shocked still, and watched as the man reached out and took his hand and curled his fingers around the coins he dropped into Nigel's palm. Before Nigel could even think of something to say in response the man had disappeared out of the room.

And if Nigel stayed in the laundry room and waited for the man to come back, there was no one else around to call him out on it.

They kept meeting there, seeming to be on the same cleaning schedule. He learned that the man's name was Adam the third time around. He'd said that he didn't like talking to strangers and promptly introduced himself to rectify the situation.

He learned that Adam loved the stars one day when he caught him in the laundry room scrubbing at a full cosmonaut suit. Adam was quick to tell him that it was a replica of the suits used for the American moon landing in the sixties. Nigel listened as he explained the safety precautions and designs that went into perfecting a suit that would function in space, the great unknown for that mission.

Nigel never was a good student, but Adam made learning easy. When Nigel beat Adam down to the laundry room the next time, Adam showed up ten minutes later with both his laundry basket and a stack of books on astrophysics and astronomy.

While their wash ran the cycle Adam told Nigel about his favorite mysteries of the cosmos.

And the next time when Adam wouldn't speak to Nigel, no matter how many questions Nigel asked about space or how he was doing — Adam broke the one-sided silence and told him that he had an autism spectrum disorder. He told Nigel about Asperger's and how he was sorry he wasn't normal, and that he tries to do better but sometimes it just doesn't work out. The apology crushed Nigel, and he told Adam that he didn't have to be anything but himself. He could be whoever the fuck he wanted, however the fuck he wanted, and whoever told him

he had to be something that he wasn't could go fuck themelves. When Adam told him to stop cursing, Nigel knew everything was going to be okay.

That night, after they went their separate ways, Nigel called up Darko and asked him every question he could think of about that cousin of his who was really into robotics. When Darko gave up on the interrogation he gave Nigel her phone number and warned him not to be an asshole.

He spoke to her for three hours straight the next morning. She told him how her parents helped her develop a schedule when she was young to help her acclimate to everyday life. She talked about how she learned to recognize her triggers when she was experiencing something new and unfamiliar, and how she provided herself a space in her adult life to bring herself down when she felt overwhelmed.

She told him how people on the autism spectrum can be very different from one another, with all different variables helping to create the person that they are.

And before he hung up she asked why he cared so much to talk with her for such a long time. At first he didn't know how to respond. All he wanted was to make sure he was doing his best to make Adam comfortable. When he told her exactly that, she said it made her very happy that Adam had such a good friend.

It had been three weeks since that call, and in that time they'd started hanging out outside of the laundry room. It made their friendship feel shockingly real to Nigel, exiting that little bubble of a room. Adam would take him out to the rooftop at night or to a clearing in the park, and he would always start by focusing his telescope on Nigel's favorite star. Nigel had only told him once about how his dad showed him the Dog Star as a boy, but Adam never forgot it.

When Adam never showed up to run his laundry, Nigel chose not to think anything of it even though his first instinct was to worry. They'd exchanged phone numbers so he merely sent Adam a text and moved on with his day. It didn't seem like Adam was home when Nigel walked by his door, but he left his own apartment door cracked open just in case he wanted to stop in.

He knew that Adam found comfort in the familiar, so as the day went on and there was no further movement next door, Nigel wondered what could have happened for Adam to stray so far from his schedule. On a regular day he would have heard the man come and go some three or four times by then.

When the sun started creeping away into dusk Nigel made up his mind and walked over to stand in front of Adam's door. He rocked on his feet, feeling nervous for the first time that he could remember in many years.

He knocked, listening carefully for any kind of response. Nigel's shoulders sank when he realized he didn't receive one. Something about all of it still tickled the back of Nigel's brain, and old instincts had him reaching for the door handle only to find it unlocked.

Hedging his bets, he slowly pushed the door open so he could walk inside and called out Adam's name as he closed the door behind him.

Their apartments were nearly identical in layout, but where they were both sparse upon first glance — Adam's was filled with love in every corner. Nigel took in everything he could see from where he stood. There was a sizable tv, adjacent to the windows, that was mounted in a wall unit filled with books.

Interspersed between the books were models of what Nigel could only imagine were spacecrafts and the solar system. The couch had three blankets neatly folded over the back. A small table with four dining chairs was placed at the mouth of the kitchen.

In the center of it all, directly across from the front door, was the door that Nigel knew led to Adam's bedroom. There was the soft glow of light leaking out from under the door, and that feeling of hesitation struck him once more. Adam never invited him into his home before. He hated to think that he was crossing a line that Adam wasn't okay with.

If their relationship with one another kept progressing he could see himself integrating into Adam's space, but he hoped this wouldn't set them back.

Pushing open the door to Adam's room led Nigel to reveal a few things that stood out to him. One was that Adam had a king sized bed. Another was that the lights he saw under the door were coming from a small projector in the corner of the room, white dots — stars — covering every inch of the space. And, he could Adam's deep yet uneven breathing.

On the floor between the bed and the wall, on the far side of the room, he saw a pair of feet sticking out at the end. From the way they were positioned he had to guess that Adam was laid out flat on his back.

"Adam?"

Again, he received no answer, but he watched as the feet flexed where they'd been relaxed and pointed.

Nigel came around the corner of the bed to finally get his eyes on Adam. He had his arms wrapped tightly around himself. His grip was white-knuckled. He'd turned his head to the side, avoiding Nigel's piercing gaze.

"Adam." The name barely escaped him that final time as he knelt down, seeming to break the man out of a trance.

Adam shot up and dropped his arms to his sides. Nigel could see where his fingers had dug in — it was already starting to bruise. Around those handprints he saw little half moons littered on his forearms that could have only come from incessant pinching.

The silence broke with a small sound of upset.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry—" Adam was nearly inconsolable, as he started to cry.

Nigel pulled the trembling man against him. He leaned back against the bed and spread his legs, bent at the knee, for Adam to fit between them. Adam's legs were under his own, and he curled into Nigel's chest. Nigel couldn't be sure who held on tighter as he felt Adam's hands tangle into the back of his shirt.

"There's nothing to be sorry for, gorgeous."

Nigel moved one hand up from where it was running up and down Adam's back to sink his fingers into the man's hair.

"I was worried about you," he admitted, which nearly started Adam apologizing all over again. He wasn't quite sure who those first apologies were for, but Nigel hated to see him look so lost.

It was never like this with Gabi. He stuffed down any urge to coddle and care, she was too strong for that. Adam was strong too, in different ways that Gabi never was. They were just barely friends and Nigel couldn't help but want to give Adam everything.

Nigel pressed his lips to the crown of Adam's head. They sat together in the dark, quiet of Adam's room and Nigel could feel every part of him relax against him.

"I'm sorry, Nigel," Adam spoke into his chest before lifting his head up and away. He settled his gaze somewhere between Nigel's brow and the tip of his nose.

"I've been alone for a long time," Adam started slow and sure. "And when my dad died when I was 29, I couldn't handle it. He helped me with everything, and I've learned to live without that help. It's hard for me to ask for what I want."

Nigel cupped Adam's face in his hands and wiped away the tears that were left behind in his distress.

"You have changed a lot of things for me very quickly, Nigel. I don't like it, but I want to."

Adam looked down at himself, and Nigel moved his hands away. He watched as Adam took in the results of his own confusion and upset. Nigel covered the bruises to hide them away.

"I want you to touch me all the time. I want you with me all the time. I didn't think I could have that and it hurt, and I just wanted it to stop. I didn't know how to get it to stop."

Before he could stop himself, Nigel ducked down and stole a kiss. It brought Adam right back into him — they couldn't get close enough.

When Nigel pulled away he saw the awe in Adam's face, in the shape of his mouth.

"I want that too," Nigel wanted to drive that point home. "Please, don't be afraid to ask for me — Fuck, gorgeous, I want all of that and more."

End Notes

See you all on the next one, come say hi in the comments :)

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